THE MAY-BOOK OF THE BREVIARY

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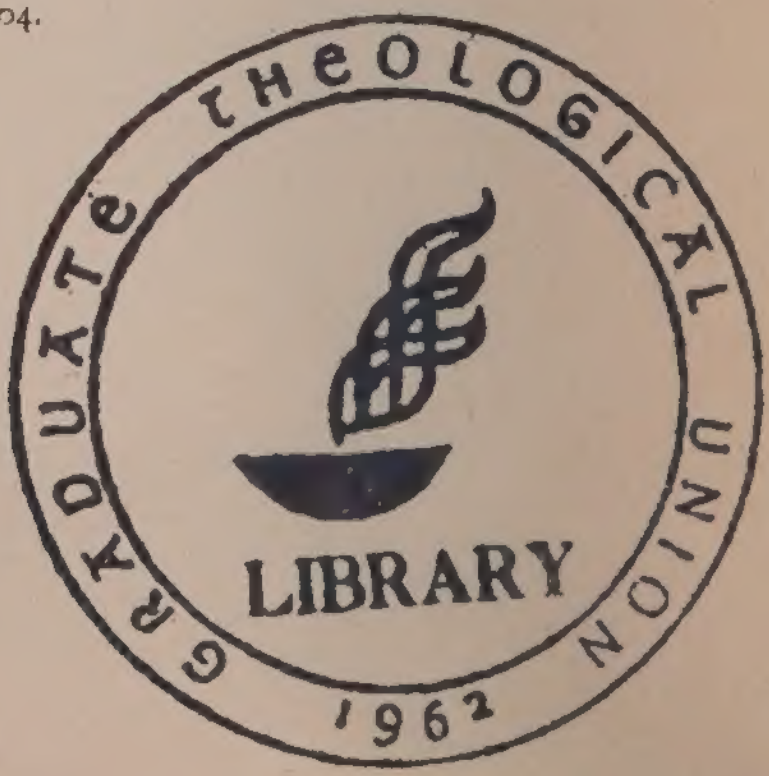

THE MAY-BOOK OF THE BREVIARY

Translated from the Latin and Arranged

BY THE

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'GOD'S BIRDS,' 'EUCHARISTIC ELEVATIONS,' ETC.

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PREFACE

THE Roman Breviary has done many things for our Blessed Lady—among them, it has fixed once for all the wording of the 'Hail Mary,' and it keeps before our eyes the fact that Saturday is the Church's constant Lady-day—but now at last it is made to reach beyond its formal scope, and to furnish forth the material for one thing more. Only one of the Blessed Virgin's many feasts is kept in May—unless, in this time of lambs and of His lambs too, we celebrate, on the first Sunday of the month, the feast of the Mother of the Good Shepherd—and this is the festival of Our Lady, Help of Christians; but here, from the Church's daily manual of prayer and spiritual reading, has been compiled what may be called a liturgical Month of

Mary. Indeed, every word of this book's component parts comes to us with the Church's explicit and actual authority, not to mention the many implicit sanctions of its origins. Most of the more than twenty authors quoted were bishops—and it is bishops, and not mere pious writers, or even theologians, as such, who, in their time and place, constitute the body of the Teaching Church; more than half the number are Doctors of the Church, among them our own Venerable Bede, the latest to be declared of that high company; and all of them, of course, are canonized saints, except Pope Pius IX., of holy and happy memory, who—one cannot but remark it in this year of the golden jubilee of his infallible definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception—speaks with a surer inspiration than any other of them all.

Some compromise has been found necessary between the chronological order of our authors and the historical sequence of the

events of our Blessed Lady's life, so that—and these are its extreme instances—the Pope of the Immaculate Conception is quoted near the beginning of the book, while St. John Damascene, who lived and died about eleven centuries before him—being the Doctor of the Assumption—is quoted towards the end. If we leave St. Irenæus alone, in the second century, in all the glory of his primacy in praise, these writers fall historically into three groups. The first group, gathered from East and West, and comprising St. Ambrose, St. John Chrysostom, St. Epiphanius, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. Peter Chrysologus, St. Cyril of Alexandria, and the Pope, St. Leo the Great—all but one Doctors of the Church—belong to the hundred years beginning with A.D. 350. The second, also Greek and Latin writers, and consisting of St. Sophronius, St. Ildephonsus, St. German, St. Bede, St. John Damascene, and St. Tharasius, lived between the years 600 and 800. The third,

who are all of the Western Church, gather round St. Bernard, 'the devout chaplain of Mary,' and the last of the Fathers, who lived in the twelfth century—St. Peter Damian being his forerunner, and his followers, St. Bonaventure, St. Bernardine of Siena, and St. Thomas of Villanova. And the whole series is brought down to our own day by Pope Pius IX., who calls to St. Irenæus, with the same voice of faith as that in which St. Irenæus calls to him, across the Christian centuries.

The reading for each day of the month consists usually of the three lessons of either the second or the third nocturn of Matins; but on the feast of Our Lady, 'Help of Christians,' both nocturns have been given, and all the more readily that they are both taken from one and the same saint. Two nocturns from St. Epiphanius have also been put together, and likewise two from St. Augustine, and, from different days in the octave of the Assumption, two from St. John

Damascene. A lesson from St. Peter Chrysologus has been taken from its place to complete two others from the same source, and the two by St. Ambrose, from which it has been dissociated, have had added to them a third from their own author. St. Jerome, however, has been left with only two. And in two cases words of St. Bernard have supplemented words of his, in the place of what had been written by casual pens on occasion of the feast which the Church was actually celebrating. As will be seen, St. Bernard has been quoted from much more largely than others; but, after all, his share in this book is much smaller in proportion than the part he takes in Our Lady's praise in the Breviary.

As to the prayers, it will be enough to say that, besides those which are common to every day of the month, such as the *Magnificat*—which the Church repeats in her vesper praise every day of her life on earth, in union with Mary, who is still singing it in

heaven—a special *Oremus* has been provided for every day's especial need.

No attempt has been made to go behind the text of the Breviary, and no change has been made in that text. Even one or two phrases which sound too absolute, and which could have been counterbalanced in a note by other words of the Breviary, and even from the same author, have been left to the good sense of the English reader as they stand in the Latin. One short sentence has been omitted from St. Ambrose's words on the Visitation, as the counsel it gives is rather curious, and is contained in the more general moral which he draws. Two or three sentences in the readings or the prayers, which are quite occasional, have been put into square brackets, being left where they occur only for the sake of the integrity of the text. The quotations from Holy Writ have been marked as such, and references have been added to them. In one or two instances the passage of Scripture to be com-

mented upon has been continued, where, as usual, the Breviary is content with its own, 'and so on'; and in the extract from St. Bernardine of Siena, Mary's Gospel words have been inserted in the several places where they are referred to in his text.

Of course, much more of Marian prayer and praise might have been gathered from the authoritative pages of the Breviary. What has been chosen is thoroughly representative of the Universal Church, and sets forth at least somewhat of the glory of the Mother of God—a glory which, when all is told that man can tell, must still remain unspeakable.

J. F.

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THE SECOND EVE.

WHEN the Lord came unto His own, and bore in His own person the nature which He had created—becoming obedient even unto the Tree, and doing away with the disobedience which had taken of a tree, thus atoning for the transgression whereby Eve, as yet a virgin spouse, had wickedly transgressed—the message of the Gospel truth was fitly brought by an Angel to the espoused Virgin, Mary. And just as the one was seduced by the words of an angel, and, having broken the commandment of God, fled from His face, so the other, from the message of an Angel, learnt the good tidings that, observant of His word, she should become the Mother of God. And as the one was induced to flee from God, so the other was persuaded to be

obedient to God, that the maiden Mary might become the Advocate of the maiden Eve. As by one maiden the human race was bound with the bonds of death, so by one other was it again unbound : against a maiden's disobedience in one scale of the balance a Maiden's obedience was cast into the other as counterpoise.

St. Irenæus.

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May 1st.

MARY, THE MIRROR OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

(From St. Ambrose.)

Let the virginity and the whole life of the Blessed Mary be before your eyes in a word-picture, as it were, from which, as from a mirror, is reflected the beauty of chastity and the loveliness of all virtue. Hence you may take the model for your life; for here, for your learning, all matters of right and exemplary conduct—what to correct, what to avoid, and what to hold fast by—are set forth and are seen. The first incentive to the learner is the position of the teacher. But who is more noble than the Mother of God? who more glorious than she whom glory itself chose? what more chaste than she who gave birth to a body, while in her own person she remained inviolate?

What shall I say of the rest of her virtues? She was a virgin, not only in her body, but also in her mind, the purity of whose desires had not been deflowered by any deceitful wile. She was humble of heart, grave in word, prudent in thought, and sparing of speech, though fond of reading; she put her hope, not in the uncertainty of riches, but in the prayer of the poor; she was diligent at her work, modest in her conversation; she had no human respect, but only cared what God might think of her; she did harm to no one, and wished well to all; she shunned boasting, she followed reason, she loved whatsoever things were good.

Such was Mary that her single life is an example to every one of us. If, then, the doer displease us not, let us approve what she did; if any woman desires her reward, she ought to follow her example. In one only Maiden, how many virtues do shine forth! The secret of modesty was her own, and a high standard of faith, and a devotedness in good offices; she was a model maiden in her home, a model servant when away from it, a model mother in the Temple. Oh, to how many maidens shall she draw

nigh! Oh, how many shall she take in her arms, and present to the Lord, saying, 'Here is one, here is one who has kept pure from spot the couch and nuptial chamber of my Son!'

Magnificat.

My soul doth magnify the Lord.

And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid; for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me; and holy is His name.

And His mercy is, from generation unto generations, to them that fear Him.

He hath showed might in His arm: He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.

He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble.

He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away.

He hath received Israel, His servant, being mindful of His mercy.

As He spoke to our fathers—to Abraham and to His seed, for ever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Salve, Regina!

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! Hail, our life, our sweetness, and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn, then, most gracious Advocate! thine eyes of mercy towards us, and, after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O merciful God! give strength unto our frailty, that we, who commemorate the holy Mother of God, may, by the help of her

intercession, rise again from our sins. Through the same Christ, our Lord. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God! despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin!

May 2nd.

THE CHOSEN OF THE CHOSEN RACE.

(From St. John Chrysostom.)

The Son of God chose not for His Mother a woman of wealth or property, but that blessed Maiden whose soul was adorned with all the virtues. It was because the Blessed Mary had preserved her purity more perfectly than any other of our human kind that she conceived Christ, our Lord, within her womb. Let us, then, have speedy recourse to this most holy Virgin, the Mother of God, that we may obtain the help of her patronage. Come, then, all you maidens, whosoever you may be, take refuge with the Mother of our Lord; for, under her protection, she will keep for you inviolate the fairest and most precious of all your possessions.

The blessed and ever-virgin Mary, my dearly beloved Brethren! was indeed most

wonderful. For, what has ever been, or can at any time be, discovered greater or more illustrious than she? She, in her sole self, is greater than the heavens and the earth. And what is holier than she? Neither Prophets, nor Apostles, nor Martyrs, nor Patriarchs, nor Angels, nor Thrones, nor Dominations, nor Seraphim, nor Cherubim, nor, finally, any other creature whatsoever, whether visible or invisible, can be found greater or more excellent than she. She is both the handmaid and the Mother of God, and at one and the same time both maiden and mother.

She is the Mother of Him who was begotten of the Father before all ages, and who is acknowledged as the Lord of all by Angels and by men. Would you know how much more eminent is this Maiden than the heavenly Powers? They stand by, in fear and trembling, veiling their faces, while she presents the human race to Him whom she brought forth. Through her also we obtain the remission of our sins. Hail, then, O Mother!—heaven! damsel! virgin! throne!—ornament, and boast, and buttress of our Church! pray for us assiduously to Jesus, thy

Son and our Lord, that through thee we may find mercy in the day of judgment, and may attain to the good things which are reserved for them who love God, by the grace and bounty of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory and honour and empire, now and for ever and ever. Amen.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O God! who didst vouchsafe to choose the Blessed Mary to be Thy court and Thy virginal dwelling-place, grant, we beseech Thee, that, strengthened by her protection, we may, through Thee, joyfully take part in commemorating her: who livest and reignest with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 3rd.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

(From the Dogmatic Bull of Pope Pius IX.)

THE ineffable God, whose ways are mercy and truth, whose will is omnipotence, and whose wisdom 'reacheth from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly' (Wisd. viii. 1), foreseeing from all eternity the most woeful ruin of all the human race which would follow on Adam's transgression, and decreeing in His mysterious purpose before the worlds were that the primal work of His bounty should be completed by the still more hidden mystery of the Incarnation of the Word, and that man who, through the wicked wiles of the devil and despite His own merciful designs, had fallen into sin, should not perish, but that what had fallen in the first Adam should be still more happily re-established in the second, from

the beginning and before all ages elected and ordained for His only-begotten Son a Mother, from whom, in the blessed fulness of time, taking flesh, He should be born; and with so great a love did He love her beyond all creatures that in her His will was wholly and well pleased.

To which end He bestowed upon her from the treasure of the Divinity so marvellous an abundance of all the heavenly gifts of grace, and so far exceeding anything bestowed on any Angel or Saint, that, always absolutely free from every stain of sin, she showed forth in herself such a plenitude of innocence and sanctity, that short of God no greater can at all be imagined and only the thought of God Himself can comprehend. And, in sooth, it was most fitting that this most worshipful Mother should always be bright with the brightness of the most perfect holiness, and that, by her absolute freedom from even the stain of original sin, she should gain so complete a victory over the ancient serpent, since to her God the Father designed to give His only Son—whom, begotten in His own bosom and equal to Himself, as His own self He loves

—that He, one and the same, might be by nature both the Son of God the Father and the Virgin's Son. . . .

The Fathers and ecclesiastical writers, learned in celestial lore, have made it their first care in their books explanatory of Scripture, or written in defence of dogma and for the instruction of the faithful, eagerly and in many and divers ways to preach and to set forth the Virgin's supreme sanctity and dignity, and her freedom from every stain of sin and glorious victory over the most dreadful enemy of the human race. And thus, when commenting on the words, 'I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed' (Gen. iii. 15), by which God, fore-announcing in the beginning of the world the remedies prepared in His mercy for the restoration of mortal man, repelled the audacity of the wily serpent, and marvellously raised up a hope for our human kind, they taught that, by His divine pronouncement, the merciful Redeemer of the human race—namely, the only-begotten Son of God, Christ Jesus—was clearly and openly pointed out, that His most Blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary, was

also indicated, and that by these words signal expression was given to the enmity against the devil which is common to both of them. And thus as Christ, the Mediator between God and man in our human nature which He had assumed, blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, fastened it like a victor to the Cross, so the most holy Virgin—bound up with Him in the most close and indissoluble bond, and together with Him and through Him giving vent to her sempiternal enmity against the venomous serpent—triumphing fully over him, has crushed his head beneath her immaculate foot. . . .

Wherefore having, in all lowliness and in fasting, offered up without intermission our own private prayers and the public prayers of the Church to God the Father through His Son, that He would deign to guide and strengthen our mind by the power of His Holy Spirit, having implored the aid of all the court of heaven, and having with groans called upon the Holy Ghost the Paraclete—now We, inspired by Him, to the honour of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, for the praise and glory of the Virgin-Mother of

God, and for the exaltation of the Catholic faith and the increase of the Christian religion, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and of our own authority, declare, pronounce, and define that: The doctrine which maintains that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first moment of her Conception, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of mankind, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed of God, and therefore to be firmly and constantly believed by all the faithful. Wherefore, if any shall dare—which God forbid!—to think in their heart anything other than that which we have defined, let them know and understand that they are condemned by their own judgment, have suffered shipwreck of the faith, and have fallen away from the unity of the Church.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O God! who, by the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, didst prepare a worthy dwelling for Thy Son, and by the foreseen death of the same, Thy Son, didst preserve her from every stain, grant, we beseech Thee, that, by her intercession, we also made pure may come unto Thee. Through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 4th.

THE PUREST PEARL OF TIME'S GREAT SEA.

(From St. Cyril of Alexandria.)

I SEE before me a joyful congregation of all the saints who, with willing hearts, have come together, at the bidding of holy Mary, the ever-virgin Mother of God. Be praise and glory unto Thee, O Holy Trinity! who hast summoned us all to this solemn feast. Praise be to thee also, O holy Mother of God! Thou art the priceless pearl of all the world; thou art the inextinguishable lamp; thou art the crown of virgins; thou art the sceptre of the true faith, the indestructible temple; thou art the limit of the Illimitable; thou art Mother and Virgin, through whom, as the holy Gospels tell, cometh the Blessed One who cometh in the name of the Lord.

Through thee is the name of the Trinity

hallowed; through thee is the precious Cross proclaimed and worshipped all over the world. Through thee there is joy in heaven; the Angels and Archangels are made glad, devils are put to flight, and man himself is recalled to heaven. Through thee every creature, once held in bondage to idols, is converted to the knowledge of the truth, believers are brought to holy Baptism, and churches are built up over all the earth. By thy help the heathen come to repent.

And what more than this? Through thee the only-begotten Son of God, that true light, shone upon them who were sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. Through thee the Prophets prophesied; through thee the Apostles preached salvation to the Gentiles. Who can set forth fully thy titles to our praise, O Mary, Mother and Maiden? My dearly beloved Brethren, let us glorify her name, while we worship her Son, the spotless Bridegroom of the Church, to whom be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Almighty and everlasting God! who, by the co-operation of the Holy Spirit, didst prepare both the body and soul of the glorious Virgin and Mother, Mary, worthily to become the dwelling-place of Thy Son, grant that, as we rejoice in recalling her to mind, so, by her merciful intercession, we may be delivered from the evils that hang over us, and from everlasting death. Through the same Christ, our Lord. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 5th.

OUR LADY AS THE SECOND EVE.

(From St. Epiphanius.)

Blessed Mary, the Mother of God, was prefigured by Eve, who bore the mystic name of 'the mother of all the living.' Eve was called the mother of all the living even when, because of her transgression, the words had been said to her, 'Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return' (Gen. iii. 19). And it is strange that, after her sin, she should have been called by that great name. It is true that, so far as things of sense are concerned, all the generations of men upon the earth are descended from Eve; but it was verily of Mary that life was born into the world, for she gave birth to Him who liveth, and it was in this way that Mary became the Mother of all the living.

To Eve was given the wherewithal to

cover and clothe herself; but to Mary God granted that she should bring forth for us a Lamb, yea, a shearling, and that from what was its glory—I mean its fleece—should be wrought for us with wisdom, and by its very own virtue, the vesture of immortality. For Eve became the cause of death to man, since it was through her that death entered into the world; but Mary is the cause of life indeed, of whom life was begotten unto us, for it was through her that the Son of God came into this world. 'Where sin abounded, grace did more abound' (Rom. v. 20), and whence came death, thence also came forth life, that life should take the place of death; and He who, through a woman, was made our life, cast out death, which by a woman had been brought in. On the one hand, the virgin Eve sinned through disobedience; on the other, it was through a Virgin that that obedience was given unto grace, to which was owing the annunciation of His coming in the flesh and life everlasting.

In what way or in what words shall I speak of the most illustrious and holy Virgin? For, next after God, she is of all things the highest

in excellence ; she is in herself more beautiful than the very Cherubim and Seraphim and all the angelic host, and, to tell her praise, neither earthly speech nor heavenly, not even that of Angels, will at all suffice. O Blessed Virgin ! O Mary, pure Dove and Bride of Heaven ! nay, in one, the heaven, the temple, and the throne of the Godhead, whose own is the Christ, the sun that shines in heaven and on earth ! Bright cloud from whom came forth the Christ, as splendid lightning comes from heaven, to light up the world ! Hail, gate of heaven ! full of grace, of whom the prophet, in the Canticle of Canticles, plainly and openly speaks in the course of his song, exclaiming : ' My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed—a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up ' (iv. 12). The Virgin is the stainless Lily who brought forth the Christ, that Rose who fadeth not away. O holy Mother of God ! O spotless Ewe ! who hast borne the Word, who took flesh of thee, even Christ the Lamb. O most holy Virgin, who hast dazzled the angelic hosts ! ' A great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun ' (Apoc. xii. 1), bearing in her arms the Light ; a great sign in

heaven—the Son of Man dwelling in the chamber of the Virgin's womb ; a great sign in heaven—the Lord of the Angels become the Virgin's Child ! The Angels accused Eve, but now they celebrate the praise of Mary, who raised up again the fallen Eve and gained admission to heaven for Adam, who had been driven forth from Paradise. For she is the Mediatress of heaven and earth, and has brought them together in a natural way.

The grace of this holy Virgin is very great. Hence, Gabriel at once salutes the Maiden, saying to her, 'Hail, full of grace!' thou who art a heaven of glory. 'Hail, full of grace!' thou Virgin adorned with many virtues. 'Hail, full of grace!' thou golden urn that containest the heavenly manna. 'Hail, full of grace!' that slakest them who thirst from the fountain of thy never-failing sweetness. Hail, most holy and immaculate Mother ! who gavest birth to the Christ who was before thee. Hail, Royal Purple, who didst robe the King of heaven and earth ! Hail, uncomprehended Book ! who didst set forth the Word and the Son of the Father for all the world to read.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O Lord! we beseech Thee, that the glorious intercession of the blessed, and glorious, and ever-virgin Mary, may protect us, and may bring us to life everlasting. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 6th.

THE ANNUNCIATION.

(From St. Peter Chrysologus.)

'THE Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the Angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women. Who, having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be. And the Angel said to her: Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call His name Jesus' (St. Luke i. 26-31).

To-day, dearly beloved Brethren, you have heard an Angel treating with a woman about

the redemption of mankind. You have heard it debated how man should return again to life by the very ways whereby he had fallen upon death. An Angel deals with Mary concerning our salvation, because an angel had dealt with Eve unto our ruin. You have heard an Angel constructing with unspeakable skill a temple to the Divine Majesty out of the slime of our flesh. You have heard how, by a mystery beyond our comprehension, God found a place on earth, and man a place in heaven. You have heard how, in an unheard-of way, God and man were joined together in one Body. You have heard how, by the Angel's encouragement, weak human nature was made strong to bear the whole glory of the Godhead.

Then, lest in Mary our fragile frame should succumb like sand beneath the heavy weight of this heavenly construction; lest the slender stem should snap asunder of the Virgin who was about to bear the fruitage of the whole human race, the Angel's voice at once forestalls and drives away all fear, saying, 'Fear not, Mary.' Before any reason is given, the exalted station of the Virgin is made known by her very name, for the Hebrew name of

Mary in Latin means Lady. The Angel, then, greets her as Lady, that the Mother of her Lord may put aside the trepidation of His handmaid, since the will of her own Offspring had bidden her to be born and to be called a Lady. 'Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace.' In very sooth, she who has found grace knows not how to fear: 'Thou hast found grace.'

She gave glory to heaven, God to earth, and faith to the nations; she put an end to vice, she ordered life aright, and set a rule for conduct. The grace which the Angel brought her the Virgin accepted, giving in return salvation to the world. A Virgin blessed indeed is she, for she possesses at the same time both the grace of maidenhood and the dignity of motherhood; a Virgin blessed indeed, for she merited the grace of that heavenly conception, and still kept the coronet of her virginity; a Virgin blessed indeed, for the glory was hers to have a Divine Offspring, and to remain the queen of all the chastities.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O God! who didst will that, at the message of the Angel, Thy Word should take flesh in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, grant, we beseech Thee, that we, who believe her verily to be the Mother of God, may be helped by her intercession in Thy sight. Through the same our Lord, Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 7th.

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER.

(From St. Leo the Great.)

A VIRGIN is chosen of the royal lineage of David, who, being destined to bear the Divine Child in her body, has already conceived her Divine and Human Offspring in her soul; and, lest in her ignorance of the supernal design which was to be wrought within her by the Holy Ghost, she should fear at such an unwonted announcement, the future Mother of God learns of it from her colloquy with the Angel, and is reassured that she has nothing to fear for her maiden modesty. And why should she not have hope concerning a conception unexampled in its character, since to her is promised the sufficiency of the power of the Most High? She believes, and her faith is confirmed by the witness of the miracle which was actually being wrought. An unhoped-for fruitfulness

is bestowed upon Elizabeth, so that there may be no longer any doubt that He who made the barren to conceive would make a virgin also to conceive. And so, the Word, the Son of God, who was in the beginning with God, by whom all things were made, and without whom was made nothing that was made, was made flesh, that He might deliver man from everlasting death.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, descending from His throne in heaven, but leaving not His Father's glory, came into this lower world, being born in a new order of things and by a new birth. He came in a new order, in that He who was invisible among His own was made visible among us; the Incomprehensible willed to be comprehended, and He who is from everlasting began to be in time. He was born by a new birth, for, being conceived of a virgin, He was born of a virgin, without any father in the flesh, and leaving inviolate the virginity of His Mother; for such a birth beseemed the future Saviour of mankind, who was to have in Himself the nature of man's being, and have no share in the defilements of man's flesh. Unlike us in His origin, He is like us in His nature; we

believe that He is free from human use and custom, but it was only by the Divine Power that a virgin did conceive, that a virgin did bring forth, and that all the while she remained a virgin still.

Since the Divine Spirit had decreed to raise up what was cast down, to bind together what was broken, and again and again to bestow such an abounding modesty as overcomes the allurements of the flesh, it must needs be that the purity of her Offspring should first keep the virginity of the Mother as inviolate as it had ever been, and that the power of the Holy Spirit should be poured forth to preserve the cloister of the modesty and the hostel of the holiness that were well-pleasing to Him; so that virginity, which in others could not survive motherhood, might still serve as a model to these others, in its being born again. Moreover, doth it not seem to have been a counsel of the highest wisdom that Christ chose to be born of a virgin? It was to the end that the devil might not know that the salvation of mankind had begun, for, the spiritual nature of the conception being hidden from him, he believed that His birth was in its nature like that of others.

who was like others in Himself. To bring this about, the Christ came forth from a virgin who had conceived of the Holy Ghost; and, contrary to the case of other mothers, this Mother drew purification from her conception's very source.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O God! who, by the fruitful virginity of the Blessed Mary, hast given unto mankind the rewards of everlasting life, grant, we beseech Thee, that we may experience the power of her intercession, through whom we have merited to receive the Author of life, our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

May 8th.

THE MOTHER OF DIVINE GRACE.

(From St. Augustine.)

THE Angel says to the Virgin Mary: 'Hail, full of grace! the Lord is with thee'—already is He with thee who shall be within thee. Tell me, then, thou Messenger of God! 'how shall this be done?' See how she recognizes an Angel, and how she questions him with confidence! And because he found her questioning him without diffidence, he consented to instruct her. Listen how: Thy virginity shall remain inviolate; only give credence to the truth, and be still a maiden undefiled. Because thy faith is inviolate, inviolate also shall be thy virginity. And now, hear *how* this shall be done: 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee,' for thou dost conceive by

faith, by believing thou dost conceive virginally; 'therefore the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God' (St. Luke i. 35). What art thou, who shalt yet bring forth? whence thy deserts? whence hast thou gotten this? how comes it that He who made thee shall in thee be made? whence, I say, whence comes to thee so great a good? Thou art a Virgin, thou art sacred, thou hast vowed a vow: great is that which thou hast merited, yea, great indeed is that which thou hast received. For how hast thou merited this? He who made thee is made in thee; He through whom thou wast made in thee is made—yea, indeed, He by whom heaven and earth were made, by whom all things were made, the Word of God, is made incarnate in thee, assuming flesh, but not laying aside His divinity. And the Word is united to flesh, the Word is wedded unto flesh, and thy womb is the nuptial-chamber of this great marriage—of this great marriage of the Word and our flesh, thy womb, I say, is the bridal-chamber—the bridal-chamber from which the Spouse came forth. In His conception He found thee virgin, and in His birth He left

thee virgin still. He bestows fecundity; He takes not away virginity. 'Whence is this to thee?' I seem too boldly to question the Maiden, and, with something like importunity, this voice of mine seems to knock at modest ears. But I see a Maiden, blushing indeed, and yet answering, though admonishing me. 'You ask me, Whence is this to me? I blush to answer thee concerning this my good: listen to the Angel's salutation, and acknowledge that in me is thy salvation. Believe Him whom I have believed. Whence is this to me, you ask? Let the Angel make answer.'—'Tell me, Angel, whence is this to Mary?'—'Already I have told you whence in my words of salutation, "Hail, full of grace!"'

But when Mary said: 'How shall this be done, because I know not man?' she said so inquiringly, not hopelessly. Though she put a question, she did not doubt as to the promise made. Oh, full of grace indeed! for so does the Angel salute her: 'Hail, full of grace!' Who will unfold what this grace was? who can give sufficient thanks for such a grace as this? Man is made, and man perishes through his own free-will; and He

who made man is found to have become man, lest man whom He made should perish. The Word who was in the beginning God with God, by whom all things were made, becomes incarnate: 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us' (St. John i. 14). The Word is made flesh; but flesh is assumed unto the Word, the Word in taking flesh did not cease to be. Oh, what a grace! How were we worthy that this should be ours?

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O God! who, by the fruitful virginity of the Blessed Mary, hast given mankind the grace of redemption, grant that we may enjoy for ever in heaven the happy companionship of her whom on earth we name the Mother of Grace. Through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 9th.

THE VISITATION.

(From St. Ambrose.)

It is only right that all who ask us to believe in them should give us ground for our belief. And so the Angel, when he announced his mystic message to the Virgin Mary, gave as a proof of what he said the example of how an older and a barren woman had conceived, to show that whatever is pleasing to God is possible to Him. When Mary heard this, she was not incredulous of the oracle, nor uncertain as to the messenger, nor in doubt as to the example given her ; but joyful because of her desire, and religious in the duty she was doing, she went into the hill-country, hastening for very joy. For whither should she go, full of God as she was, but to the hills, and that with haste? The grace of the Holy Ghost knoweth nought of tardy accomplishment.

Mary, who had hitherto lived all alone in the privacy of home, was not deterred by her virginal shyness from appearing in public; nor did the rough mountain ways affright her; nor did the length of the journey retard her in the fulfilment of her duty. The Maiden left her home and went into the hill-country with haste, mindful of her office, and not caring about the trouble, urged by her affection to that from which her maidenhood would have excused her. Learn, ye maidens, not to run about between houses other than your own, not to loiter in the streets, not to fall into speech with others in public places. Mary, loth to leave her home, hastens on her way once she has left it; and she remains with her cousin three months.

Maidens! you have learnt a lesson from the modesty of Mary, learn a lesson also from her humility. She came, as one relation comes to another, and as the younger comes to the elder; and not only did she come, but in her salutation also was she first. For the purer a maiden is, the humbler also ought she to be. She will know how to defer to her elders. Let her who professes chastity be a mistress in humility. This is the source of

piety, and the rule of its teaching. For here, as we must see, the superior comes to the inferior, that the inferior may be helped—Mary comes to Elizabeth, Christ to John.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Grant, O Lord! we beseech Thee, unto Thy servants, the gift of heavenly grace, that as the Child-bearing of the Blessed Virgin was unto them the beginning of salvation, so the solemn commemoration of her Visitation may bring them an increase of peace. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 10th.

EVE AND MARY.

(From St. Augustine.)

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN! the day for which we have longed, the day of the blessed, and venerable, and ever-virgin Mary, has come; therefore let our earth rejoice with the greatest exultation, made illustrious, as it has been, by the birth of this glorious Virgin. For she is the flower of the fields, from which the precious lily of the valley has sprung, and through her Child-bearing the nature we received from our first parents has been changed, and their fault has been blotted out. At her person stopped short the unhappy sentence which was pronounced against Eve in these words: 'In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children' (Gen. iii. 16), for she in joy brought forth the Lord.

Eve mourned, but Mary rejoiced; Eve

bore tears, but the fruit of Mary's womb was joy; for whereas the one gave birth to a sinner, of the other was born the sinless One. The mother of our race brought pain into the world, but the Mother of our Lord brought salvation into the world. Eve was the foundress of sin, but Mary was the foundress of merit. Eve was baneful to us by her fall, but Mary wrought our good, giving us life again. The one wounded us, while the other healed us. The disobedience of the one was exchanged for the obedience of the other, and for a want of faith, faith was the compensation.

And now let Mary wake the loud tones of the organ, and between its quick notes let the Mother's timbrel sound. Let the gladdened choirs sing with her, and let the sweet-sounding canticles mingle together in alternating antiphons. But hearken now to our timbrel-player's song: 'My soul doth magnify the Lord,' she sings, 'and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid; for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. Because He that is mighty hath done great things to

me' (St. Luke i. 46-49). The miracle of a new birth has thus effaced the effect of weakness and error, and the singing of Mary has quite shut out the wailing voice of Eve.

Mary is happy with a wondering joy at her motherhood, and she is jubilant that she has brought forth by the Holy Ghost; unwedded as she is, she is not afraid at her motherhood, but wonders and exults at it. O Woman blessed above women! who knoweth not man at all, and yet compasseth a man within her womb. Mary encompasseth a man from believing the Angel, for Eve was the death of a man by giving assent to the serpent. Oh, happy obedience! Oh, signal grace! which, humbly infusing faith, embodied within her Him who made the heavens. By this she merited the glory which later she increased. 'Behold!' she saith, 'from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed' (St. Luke i. 48). O blessed Mary! who can ever pay thee in full the debt of gratitude we owe thee, and who can praise thee enough, since by thy sole consent thou didst come to the succour of the world that was lost? What praises shall the frailty

of the human race repay unto thee, for only through thy intervention has it found a way for its own renewal? Accept, then, these thanksgivings, slight as they are, and so much less than thy deserts; and since thou dost receive our petitions, by thy own prayers win us the pardon of our sins. Let our supplications enter into that audience-chamber where prayers are heard, and bring us back the antidote for our reconciliation.

As we ask through thee, may we through thee be pardoned; may we be granted what we pray for in our trustfulness. What we offer to thee, do thou receive; what we pray for, do thou grant; what we are afraid of, do thou have pardoned, for thou art the only hope of sinners. Through thee we hope for the remission of our sins, and in thee, O thou most blessed One! is our expectation of reward. Holy Mary! be thou a help to the unhappy, be an aid to the fearful, be a comfort to the sorrowful; pray for the people, plead for the clergy, intercede for all women who are vowed unto God. May all experience thy succour who celebrate thy sacred birth.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O God! who didst will that Thy Word, at the message of the Angel, should take flesh in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary grant to us, Thy suppliants, that we, who believe her to be truly the Mother of God, may be helped by her intercessions with Thee. Through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 11th.

THE OVERFLOWING FOUNT OF GRACE.

(From St. Jerome.)

WHAT manner of woman the blessed, and glorious, and ever-virgin Mary was is divinely made known to us by the Angel when he says: 'Hail, full of grace! the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women.' In sooth, it was only fitting that that Virgin should be dowered with such gifts as should fill her full of grace, who gave glory to heaven, and our Lord to earth; who brought back peace once more, giving faith to the Gentiles, putting an end to vice, and tracing for us a way of life and a line of conduct. And she is full indeed; to others grace was given only in measure, but the very fulness of grace poured itself forth at once on Mary. Verily, full of grace is she; for though, as is our faith, the Patriarchs and

the Prophets had grace, yet it was not in the same fulness as she, for into Mary there came a fulness of all the grace which is in Christ, though it is in her otherwise than it is in Him. And therefore is it said: 'Blessed art thou among women'; that is to say, blessed above all other women. And thus the blessedness of Mary quite did away with anything resulting from the malediction upon Eve.

It is in her praise that Solomon writes in the Canticle of Canticles: 'Arise, my dove, my undefiled, for winter is now past, the rain is over and gone'; and again: 'Come from Libanus, come; thou shalt be crowned' (ii., iv.). And not undeservedly is she bidden to come from Libanus, for Libanus means whiteness. For she was white with the many virtues she merited, and was made whiter than the whitest snow with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, showing forth in all things the simplicity of the dove; for whatever was wrought within her, was all purity and simplicity, all grace and truth, all mercy and justice looking forth from heaven; and therefore was she without stain, because in her nought have ever been corrupted. She has encompassed a Man in her womb, as

saith the holy Jeremias, and not from any other source has she gotten Him. 'The Lord' (he says) 'hath created a new thing upon the earth: a woman shall compass a man" (xxxi. 22).

A new thing it was, indeed, and a new thing surpassing all others in might, when God (whom the world cannot bear, nor any man see and live) so entered into the hostel of her womb as to leave her cloistral frame inviolate, and in such manner was borne therein that the whole Godhead was encompassed there, and so came forth from thence that, as Ezechiel confesses, the gate was closely shut the while. Wherefore in the aforementioned Canticle of Canticles is sung: 'A garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up—thine odours are a paradise' (iv. 12, 13). A garden of delights in very sooth, in which are set all kinds of flowers and the good odour of all virtues, and so enclosed as to be safe and inviolable from the corruption of all guileful deceits; yea, a fountain sealed with the seal of all the Holy Trinity.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O almighty and eternal God! grant, we beseech Thee, that, venerating in joyful commemoration the most inviolate virginity of the most pure Virgin Mary, we may, by her intercession, attain to purity of both mind and body. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 12th.

'BLESSED ART THOU AMONGST WOMEN.'

(From St. Ildephonsus.)

O my Lady and my Sovereign, who bearest rule over me, Mother of my Lord, handmaid of thy Son, who gavest birth to the Creator of the world! I pray thee, I beg of thee, I beseech thee, that I may be endued with the spirit of thy Lord, the spirit of thy Son, yea, the spirit of my Redeemer; that I may give heed to things true and worthy of thee, that I may speak things true and worthy, that I may love all things whatsoever that are true and worthy of thee. For thou wast chosen of God, assumed of God, called of God; thou art very near to God, thou cleavest to God, thou art bound unto God; thou wast visited by an Angel, saluted by an Angel, blessed by an Angel, made happy by an Angel; thou wast troubled at his words,

astounded at thine own thought, confounded at his salutation, and in wonderment at what his words announced unto thee.

Thou art told that thou hast found grace with God, and thou art bidden not to fear. By this thou art strengthened in thy trust, thou art instructed in the knowledge of wonderful things, thou art borne forward to a new, an unheard-of, glory. The Angel tells thee of thy Child to be—and after His birth thou remainest a Virgin still inviolate. Then we are given the assurance of thy virginity; and the Angel imparts to thee the glad tidings that the Holy One, the Son of God, shall be born of thee, and announces to thee in his wondrous way the power of the new-born King. Thou askest how this shall be—thou seekest to know the source of this, thou inquirest as to the reason of it, thou askest how it shall be, thou wouldst know in what order it shall be. Listen to an oracle hitherto unheard, look upon an unwonted work, behold this secret yet unknown, wait for this wonder hitherto unseen: 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee' (St. Luke i. 35).

By all the Trinity shall this conception be wrought invisibly within thee, but only the person of the Son of God shall take flesh from thee and of thy body shall be born. And, therefore, the Holy Thing which shall be conceived in thee, which shall be born of thee, which shall come forth from thee, which shall bud forth from thee—'which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.' For 'He shall be great,' He shall be the God of power, the King of all ages, the Maker of all things. Behold, 'blessed art thou amongst women'—maiden among mothers, Lady among handmaids, Queen among thy sisters. Behold, for this all generations shall call thee blessed, all the powers of heaven know thee to be blessed, all the prophets proclaim thee blessed, all the nations honour thee as blessed. Our faith finds thee blessed, our souls find thee blessed, our love finds thee blessed; and I, I bless thee by the praise and the preaching of my lips.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O almighty and merciful God! who, for the succour of the human race, didst will that the Blessed Virgin Mary should be the Mother of Thine only-begotten Son, grant us, we beseech Thee, that, by her intercession, we may be enabled to avoid all diabolical contagion, and to serve Thee with sincere mind. Through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 13th.

MARY'S FIAT.

(From St. Thomas of Villanova.)

DESIRING with all the desire of my soul to praise, as well as my mental insufficiency allows me, the admirable Mary, Mother of God, eminent in every virtue, I could hardly find in Sacred Scripture any words of praise which express to us to the letter her glory and her excellence. For though many mystical things are said of her in the Prophets, and facts are everywhere read from which the greatness of her virtue may plainly be seen, yet in the writings of the Evangelists or the Apostles there is seldom any word said of her, and more rarely still any word of praise, although, to tell the truth, she is not passed over in silence to such a point that, in their writings, some faint ray of her virtues does not break out from certain chinks, as it were, between their words. But from what should we be

better able to judge of her glory, and her virtues, and the gifts with which her soul was dowered, than from that wonderful colloquy between herself and the Angel? And in this, over and above the fact that by the Angel's words she is deservedly proclaimed most full of grace and the first amongst all women, the riches of her praise shone out in a much more remarkable way from her own deeds and words. The Angel, being come in with joy, saluted with reverence, saying; 'Hail, full of grace! the Lord is with thee': full of grace—to be fulfilled with the Godhead, to be overshadowed with might: full of grace—'of whose fulness we have all received,' from whose abundance the whole world shall be filled; full, indeed, in whose soul no room had been left for sin, no way left open to iniquity. 'The Lord is with thee.' And how with thee?—certainly, not as with me, but as nowhere else: with thee in thy body, with thee in thy mind, with thee in thy soul, with thee by His counsel, with thee in the womb, with thee by His help, with thee in His rising, with thee in His exit, with thee at the end, with thee without end.

Having heard, then, the heavenly message, she thus speaks to the Angel: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word' (St. Luke i. 38). So it is that, by a great mystery and a most profound instinct of deity, when about to conceive God, she calls to mind her handmaid condition, that she may give up the Son who springs from her to the service of the world. 'Be it done unto me,' she says, 'according to thy word'; and at her word the Word is made flesh within her womb. Oh, mighty fiat! Oh, effective fiat! Oh, fiat above every fiat! to be venerated with honour without end. By this word 'fiat' the world was made. By this word the Most High created heaven and earth; but such a fiat was not heard in the world, O blessed One! as that which now thou hast uttered. For what was done? who can tell what was done? Nature is astounded, the judgment hesitates, the sense grows dull, the tongue grows mute, the reason fails, the intelligence does not understand what was done in Mary when she said: 'Be it done unto me according to thy word.'

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O almighty and merciful God! who hast given to sinners the blessed and ever-virgin Mary to be their refuge and their help, grant that, under her protection, and absolved from all sin, we may attain to the happy effect of Thy mercy. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 14th.

'VIRGO PRÆDICANDA.'

(From St. German.)

'HAIL, Mary, full of grace!' holier than the saints and higher than the heavens, more glorious than the Cherubim, more honourable than the Seraphim, more venerable than any other creature whatsoever. Hail, O Dove! who dost bear unto us both the fruit of the olive and Him who will save us from the spiritual deluge, and dost announce unto us the harbour of salvation, whose 'wings are covered with silver, and the hinder parts of the back with the paleness of gold (Ps. lxvii. 14), beneath the bright beams of the most holy and illuminating Spirit. Hail, most pleasant human Paradise of God! now planted towards the Orient by His most bountiful and omnipotent right hand, and bringing forth unto Him the sweet-smelling Lily and the never-fading Rose, for the healing of them who in the Occident had

imbibed the pestilential bitterness of death, which is mortal to the soul—Paradise in which, unto the knowledge of the truth, the tree of life has bourgeoned, of which if any man taste he shall attain to everlasting life. Hail, most holily built, and spotless, and most pure Palace of the King, God Most High! adorned with all His high and royal magnificence, hospitably open to all, and refreshing them with mystical delights—Palace in which is set that spiritual bridal-chamber, bright with various beauty, that is not made with hands; in which the Word, willing to call back to Him the wandering human race, wedded flesh unto Himself, that He might reconcile to the Father those who by their own will were castaways.

Hail, O rich and shady mountain of God! where was the pasture of the true Lamb who bore our sins and our infirmities—mountain from which hath rolled down that Stone not hewn with hands, which has broken the altars of the idols, and has become the main corner-stone, marvellous in our eyes. Hail! thou holy throne of God, thou divine storehouse, thou temple of glory, thou beauteous ornament, thou choice

treasure, thou mercy-seat of all the world, thou heaven which dost declare the glory of God. Hail, O thou urn fashioned of pure gold! that containest that most delightful sweetness of our souls—I mean, that manna which is Christ. O most pure Virgin, most worthy of all praise and all homage! O treasury, dedicate to God, responding to all the needs of men! thou art an untilled earth, an unploughed field; thou art a vine in full flower, an overflowing fountain of waters, a Virgin bringing forth; thou art the Mother that knew not man, a hidden treasure of innocence, and the glory of holiness.

By the most acceptable prayers, potent with thy maternal power, which thou addressest to the Lord God, the Creator of all things, thy Son, who had on earth no father, and was of thee alone begotten, guide, as with a hand on the helm, all the orders of the Church, and pilot her unto the port of peace. Clothe most gloriously her priests with righteousness, and with the exulting gladness of spotless faith—a faith that is tried and true. Rule thou, in prosperity and peace, the sceptres of orthodox princes who,

far beyond all the splendours of their purple and their gold, and more precious far than pearls and precious stones, take thee for their diadem and royal robe, nay, for the most enduring glory of their realm. Subject to these the infidel nations who blaspheme against thee and against the God who was born of thee, and strew them under their feet; and strengthen the people who are subject to them to continue, according to the commandment of God, in the homage of their meek obedience. [Crown this thy city, which has thee for tower and for foundation—crown her with the crown of victory, and, girding it round about with might, ever guard the temple of God, and keep inviolate the beauty of His dwelling-place]. Deliver from all difficulty and anguish of mind all them that praise thee; give liberty to the captive; to the wanderer, the homeless, and all who are destitute, be thou a consolation. Stretch out thy helping hand to the whole world, that with joy and gladness we may celebrate thy solemn feasts [as this which now we keep unto its close with such festive splendour]. Through Christ Jesus, the Ruler of all things, and

our true God, to whom, together with the Father, who is the holy fountain of life, and the co-ruling, consubstantial, and co-eternal Spirit, be glory and power, now and for ever and ever. Amen.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O God! who, with unspeakable providence, dost rule and govern the whole world, grant to us, thy servants, that, by the intercession of the Blessed Mary, ever a Virgin, who pastureth us with watchful care, we may be protected from our enemies, satiated with the sweetness of Thy fruit, and led securely to the heavenly fatherland. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 15th.

THE SON OF MARY IS THE SON OF MAN.

(From the Venerable Bede.)

'As (Jesus) spoke (to the multitudes), a certain woman from the crowd, lifting up her voice, said to Him: Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck. But He said: Yea, rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it' (St. Luke xi. 27, 28).

It is plain that this was a woman of great devotedness and faith, for while the Scribes and Pharisees were at once tempting our Lord and blaspheming Him, she acknowledges His Incarnation with so much sincerity, and confesses it with so much confidence before them all, as to confound both the calumny of those personages who were actually present and the bad faith of heretics who were yet to come. For, just as the

Jews at that time, blaspheming the works of the Holy Ghost, denied that the Son of God was verily consubstantial with the Father, so also in a later day, by denying that the ever-virgin Mary, under the mighty operation of the Holy Ghost, did supply flesh to the only-begotten Son of God when He was to be born in a human body, in like manner did these heretics deny that the Son of Man could be confessed to be consubstantial with His Mother.

But if we say that the flesh of the Word of God Incarnate was other than the flesh of His Virgin-Mother, then the womb that bore Him and the breasts that gave Him suck are proclaimed blessed without any reason. But the Apostle saith: 'God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law' (Gal. iv. 4); and we must not listen to them who think we ought to read, 'born of a woman, made under the law,' but, rather, '*made* of a woman'; for, conceived in the Virgin's womb, He took His flesh of the flesh of His Mother, and not out of nothing or from any other source, for, had He not been of human origin, He could not have been called the Son of Man. Then, having said so much

in answer to Eutyches, let us lift up our voices also in union with the Catholic Church, of which this woman was the figure; let us raise up our hearts from amidst the crowd, and say to our Saviour : 'Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck.'

'Yea, rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.' Our Saviour sweetly acquiesces in the woman's testimony, declaring that not only was she blessed who was found worthy to bring forth the Word of God in the flesh, but that all those also are blessed who, by faith which cometh of hearing, study to conceive spiritually this same Word, and, by keeping Him through good works, bring Him forth and nurse Him, as it were, in their own hearts or in the hearts of others ; yea, and that the Mother of God herself was blessed because she was in time the handmaid of the Word made Flesh, and still more because by her love of Him she keeps Him hers for ever and ever.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy ! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God !
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O God ! whose mercy is infinite, grant to us, by the intercession of the most holy Mother of Thine only-begotten Son, that we may merit to obtain mercy abundantly on earth and glory in heaven. Through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 16th.

THE CAUSE OF OUR JOY.

(From St. Sophronius.)

What does this blessed Angel say who is sent to the most pure Virgin? How does he break to her the most happy tidings which he brings? 'Hail, full of grace! the Lord is with thee.' The messenger of joy strikes a joyful note in his first word to her. For well he knew, and well he realized, that his message would bring joy to every man and to every creature too, and cast out every sorrow from every one of them; he knew that the world would be enlightened by the divine knowledge of this mystery; he knew that the darkness of error would be dispersed by it; he knew that the sting of death would be blunted by it; he knew that the power of corruption would be broken by it; he knew that from hell victory would be snatched by it—he knew that salvation would shine on

fallen man, who had hitherto been oppressed with the yoke of all these evils, since the day when he was shut out from the delights of Paradise and was banished from that happy home. This is why he opens on a happy note the matter of his embassy; this is why he sends out happy words as forerunners of his message; this is why in these joyful heralds joy goes on before, for what shall follow shall bring joy to all who shall believe.

And, indeed, it was only meet and just that the divine announcement of our joy should begin with words and accents that call forth gladness. And this is the reason why the Angel speaks of joy before anything else, because he is not ignorant of what will be the result of his auspicious legation, and knows well that the colloquy that was held will manifestly bring joy to the whole world. And, certainly, what joy or jubilation can there be at all comparable to the words which were addressed to the Blessed Virgin, the mother of our joy? Rejoice, O Mother of super-celestial joy! Rejoice, O thou who nurturest joy the most sublime! Rejoice, O principal seat of the joy of salvation! Rejoice, O source of joy immortal!

Rejoice, O mystic hostel of joy ineffable! Rejoice, O most blessed fountain of unfailing joy! O divine storehouse of everlasting joy! Rejoice, O most flourishing tree of life-giving joy! Rejoice, O Virgin-Mother of God! Rejoice, O Virgin, after childbirth most inviolate! Rejoice, O wonder above all wonders most to be wondered at!

Who shall be able to tell forth thy glory? Who shall dare to say in words the marvel that thou art? Who can trust himself to set forth thy magnificence? Thou hast exalted our human nature; thou hast surpassed all the Angelic choirs; thou hast cast into shade the splendours of the Archangels; thou pointest to the lofty seats of the Thrones placed beneath thee; thou dost lower the height of the Dominations; thou takest precedence of the Principalities; the power of the Powers is weak beside thine; thou in thy virtue hast gone forth more mighty than the Virtues themselves; thine earthly eyes have pierced beyond the reach of the strong-eyed Cherubim; thy soul, on wings sustained of God, has flown beyond the flight of the six-winged Seraphim—in a word, thou hast far surpassed all other things created, for thou

didst shine with a purity excelling that of every other creature, and thou didst conceive within thee the Creator of all creatures, and didst bear Him in thy womb, and didst give Him birth: of all creatures thou alone wast made the Mother of God.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Grant, we beseech Thee, O Lord God! that we, Thy servants, may enjoy continual health of mind and body, and by the glorious intercession of the Blessed Mary, ever a Virgin, may be delivered from present sadness, and may enter into the fruition of everlasting joy. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 17th.

'THOU HAST FOUND GRACE WITH GOD.'

(From St. Sophronius.)

Blessed indeed art thou amongst women, for thou hast changed the curse of Eve into a blessing; for thou thyself hast brought a blessing upon Adam, who lay smitten by the primal curse. Blessed indeed art thou amongst women, for the blessing of the Father dawned on men through thee, and delivered them from the olden malediction. Blessed indeed art thou amongst women, for through thee thine own ancestors found salvation; for thou wast destined to bring forth a Saviour, by whom their divine salvation should be wrought. Blessed indeed art thou amongst women, for thou, a Virgin, didst bear Him for thy fruit, who blesses all the earth and delivers it from the curse of bringing forth thorns. Blessed indeed art

thou amongst women, for, though by nature a mere woman, thou wast made in very truth the Mother of God. For if He who is to be born of thee be verily God Incarnate, thou art rightly and truly called the Mother of God, since most truly thou dost bring forth God.

'Fear not, Mary! for thou hast found grace with God' (St. Luke i. 30)—grace that passes not away; thou hast found grace with God, grace that excels all other grace; thou hast found grace with God, such as with all desire may be desired; thou hast found grace with God, the most surpassing of all graces; thou hast found grace with God, that never fails away; thou hast found grace with God, grace which has power to save thee; thou hast found grace with God, such grace as by no onslaught can be shaken; thou hast found grace with God, grace that is all invincible; thou hast found grace with God, which shall endure for ever and for ever. Others, and many others, have flourished before thee, remarkable for their sanctity, but to none of them, as to thee, has the plenitude of grace been given; no one has been raised to such a height of magnificence as thine; no one has been preserved like thee with purifying grace; no

one has shone with such a heavenly light as thou hast; no one has been exalted beyond all height like thee.

And this was only just, for no one came so near to God as thou didst; no one was so richly endowed with the gifts of God as thou wast; no one received so fully of the grace of God as thou. Thou surpassest anything and everything that is excellent among men; thy gifts are greater far than have ever been bestowed by the bounty of God upon all others. For thou art richer far than others, in the possession of the God who dwelt within thee. No one could ever so comprehend God as thou didst; no one could so enjoy the presence of God; no one was found worthy to be so illuminated by God as thou wast; and, therefore, not only didst thou harbour God, the Creator and the Lord of all things, within thee, but He took flesh in an ineffable manner of thee, and was borne in thy womb, and was afterwards born of thee, to redeem all men from His Father's condemnation, and to bestow upon them everlasting salvation. This is why I have cried out to thee, and why with all my strength I will cry out to thee once more: 'Hail, full of grace! the Lord

is with thee; blessed art thou among women.'

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O God! who didst give us the Mother of Thy beloved Son to be our mother also [and didst vouchsafe to glorify her beautiful picture by a wonderful apparition] grant, we beseech Thee, that, always following closely her counsels, we may be enabled to live according to Thy Heart, and happily come to the heavenly fatherland. Through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 18th.

AN AVE MARIA.

(From St. Tharasius.)

O MARY! what praises shall we accumulate upon thee? O Maiden undefiled! O Virgin inviolate! O glory of daughters and pride of womanhood! O holy Maiden-Mother! 'blessed art thou amongst women'; renowned art thou for thy purity; with virginity thou art signed and sealed. Thou art an expiation for the curse of Adam; thou art a payment of the debt of Eve. Thou art Abel's most pure oblation, the chosen of his firstlings, his spotless sacrifice. Thou art the hope of Enos, his hope in God, that knew no blush of shame. Thou art the grace that Enoch enjoyed, and his translation to a better life than this. Thou art the ark of Noah, and the second birth which reconciled us unto God. Thou art the refulgent glory of the kingship and the priesthood of Melchisedech.

Thou art the unshaken trust of Abraham, and his obedient faith in the promise of future progeny. Thou art the new sacrifice of Isaac and his reasonable holocaust. Thou art the cause of that going-up on the ladder of Jacob, and the most noble evidence of the enduring fruitfulness of the twelve tribes. Thou hast come forth, the daughter of the race of Juda; thou art the modesty of Joseph, and the overthrow of that old Egypt, to wit, the synagogue of the Jews, O spotless One! Thou art the book of Moses, the Lawgiver, in which, divinely prepared, was written the mystery of our redemption, and on whose tablets the law was scriptured by the finger of God, as though on Mount Sinai, wherein the new Israel shall be freed from the slavery of a spiritual Egypt, as of old that people in the desert were filled with manna and with water from the rock—that Rock which was Christ, who was to come forth from thy womb like a bridegroom from his bridal-chamber. Thou art the flowering rod of Aaron; thou art that daughter of David who was clad in cloth of gold wrought upon with divers colours. Thou art the mirror of

the Prophets and the fulfilment of all that they foretold. It is thou whom Ezechiel boldly proclaimed in prophecy as the closed gate, by which no man shall ever pass save the Lord God alone, who shall leave it still unopened. Thou art the rod of Jesse, of whom Isaias, that great master of speech, foretells, from which the flower, which is Christ, shall bloom, who, rooting out the fruits of vice, shall set in His field the plants of a knowledge that is divine. Thou art she whom Jeremias pointed out beforehand in the words: 'Behold! the days shall come, saith the Lord, and I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Juda, not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers' (xxxi. 31, 32), thereby signifying the coming and the birth of thy Son, and calling all the nations to worship God even to the very ends of the earth. Thou art also the great mountain spoken of by Daniel, the man of desires, whence should be hewn the corner-stone which shall reduce to ruin and utterly destroy the image of the serpent of many shapes.

Thee I honour as an immaculate ewe-

lamb; thee I proclaim as full of grace; thee I sing as the pure and spotless tabernacle of God. And indeed, 'Where sin abounded, grace did more abound' (Rom. v. 20). By a woman we have death for heritage; through a woman He once more shall restore all things. Through the serpent we have had given us food of bitter taste, but through Him we shall partake of the food of immortality once again. Eve, our first mother, brought Cain into the world, the head of all hatred and of all wickedness; thine only-begotten Son shall be the first-begotten of life and resurrection. O unheard-of prodigy! O marvellous new thing! O wisdom which no words can fitly tell!

[And we, the people of God, a holy nation, an acceptable congregation, progeny of the dove and children of grace, let us, with pure minds and unpolluted lips, raise in many divers tongues our sweet-sounding hymns on this our Lady's festival. Let us celebrate this high and illustrious festivity, this primal solemnity, which is a joy to the Angels, and is most worthy of the praise of men, honouring, as is meet, that *Ave* of Gabriel with reverence and with holy joy.] Hail! delight

of the Father, through whom the knowledge of God has flowed to the uttermost bounds of the earth. Hail! dwelling-place of the Son, whence He came forth incarnate. Hail! tabernacle of the Holy Ghost, whose praise no words can tell. Hail! thou that art more holy than the Cherubim; hail! thou that art more glorious than the Seraphim; hail! thou that art more comprehensive than the heavens; hail! thou that art more splendid than the sun; hail! thou that shinest brighter than the moon; hail! thou manifold glory of the stars; hail! light cloud that droppest down in rain from heaven; hail! holy breeze, that clearest the earth of the breath of sin. Hail! noble subject of the praise of the Prophets; hail! sound gone forth into all the earth from the lips of the Apostles; hail! excelling theme of the praise of the Martyrs; hail! worthy of all the loud-voiced praise of the Patriarchs; hail! thou greatest glory of all the saints; hail! source of health to all mortals; hail, O Queen! for us achieving peace; hail! spotless glory of all motherhood. Hail! advocate of all beneath the sky; hail! reparation of the whole world. 'Hail, full of grace! the

Lord is with thee'—who was before thee, and who was born of thee, and who is with us. To Him, with the Father and the most holy and life-giving Spirit, be praise now and ever, world without end. Amen.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God! that, by the intercessions and prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the souls of the faithful departed may obtain forgiveness, and we the gifts of Thy grace and the rewards of everlasting life. Who livest and reignest, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 19th.

'EVA'S NAME REVERSING.'

(From St. Bernard.)

Rejoice, O Father Adam! but do thou exult still more, O Mother Eve!—you who were the first parents of us all, and the ruin of us all, and, what is still worse, our ruin before you gave us life. Be comforted (I say), both of you, in your daughter, and such a daughter, but chiefly thou from whom at first the evil came, and whose reproach has passed upon all women. For now the time is nigh in which the reproach shall be taken away, and the man no longer have any cause of complaint; for he, indeed, when unwisely he was trying to excuse himself, did not hesitate cruelly to accuse her, saying, 'The woman, whom Thou gavest me, gave me of the tree, and I did eat' (Gen. iii. 12). Therefore, O Eve! have recourse to Mary; Mother! have recourse to thy Daughter; let the Daughter answer for the mother; let her

take away her mother's reproach; let her make satisfaction to her father in her mother's stead; for, lo! if man fell through a woman, it is only through a woman that he is raised up again. What didst thou say, O Adam? 'The woman, whom Thou gavest me, gave me of the tree, and I did eat.' These are wicked words, and by them thou dost aggravate thy fault rather than diminish it. Nevertheless, Wisdom overcame thy malice, for, in questioning thee, God endeavoured to elicit from thee some occasion for forgiveness, but in vain; so He found it in the treasure of His own unfailing mercy. For, a woman answers for a woman, a prudent one for a foolish one, a humble one for a proud one—one who, instead of the tree of death, gives thee to taste of life, and, instead of that poisonous fruit of bitterness, brings forth the sweetness of everlasting fruit. Change, then, those iniquitous words of excuse into a word of thanksgiving, and say: 'Lord! the woman, whom Thou gavest me, gave me of the tree of life, and I did eat; and it became sweeter than honey to my mouth, for by it Thou hast given me life.'

For, behold, it was for this that the Angel

was sent to the Virgin. O admirable Virgin! and most worthy of all honour; O Woman! deserving of especial veneration, more wonderful than all women, repairing thy first parents' fault, and giving life to them that come after thee. If it is not she, who is it that seems to you to be foretold of God when He says to the serpent: 'I will put enmities between thee and the woman' (Gen. iii. 15)? And if you are still in doubt whether He spake of Mary, listen to what follows: 'She shall crush thy head.' To whom but to Mary was this victory reserved? She, beyond all doubt, crushed his venomous head; for she brought to nought every suggestion of the Evil One, whether the allurement of the flesh or the pride of the spirit. Whom else did Solomon seek after when he said: 'Who shall find a valiant woman' (Prov. xxxi. 10)? For the Wise Man knew well the weakness of woman—how weak she is in body and how unstable in mind. Yet, because he had read that God promised that he who had prevailed by a woman by a woman also should be overcome (and he himself saw that this was meet), in great admiration he said: 'Who shall

find a valiant woman ?'—which is as though one should say: If the salvation of us all, the restitution of our innocence, and our victory over the enemy, lies thus in the hands of a woman, we must needs find a woman of such great virtue as will fit her for so great a work.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O Lord Jesus Christ! who hast willed that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Thy Mother —who was from the first Immaculate— should shine forth in innumerable miracles, grant that, always imploring her patronage, we may attain to everlasting joy. Who livest and reignest, with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 20th.

THE MOTHER OF THE SON OF GOD.

(From St. Bernard.)

Mary calls God, the Lord of the Angels, her Son, saying, 'Son! why hast Thou done so to us?' (St. Luke ii. 48). Which of the Angels would dare to do so? It is enough for them, and they esteem it greatly, that, being spirits by nature, they should by grace be made and be called Angels, according to that of David: 'Who maketh spirits his Angels' (Ps. ciii. 4, and Heb. i. 7). But Mary, conscious of her motherhood, with confidence calls that Majesty her Son, whom with awe and reverence they serve; and God does not despise to be called what He has deigned to become. For, a little further on, the Evangelist adds: 'And He was subject to them' (St. Luke ii. 51). Who, to whom? God to men. God (I say), to whom the Angels are subject, whom Principalities and Powers obey —God was subject to Mary.

Marvel at both these things, and choose at which you will marvel the more—whether at the most benignant condescension of the Son or the most sublime dignity of the Mother. On either side is surprise, nay, wondering amazement. That God should obey a woman, is humility without parallel; that a woman should rule over God is an exaltation quite unique. To the praise of virgins only is it sung that 'these follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth' (Apoc. xiv. 4). Of what praise, then, do you deem her worthy, who even goeth before Him? Learn, O man! to obey; learn, O earth! to be subject; learn, O dust! to submit. Speaking of thy Maker, the Evangelist says: 'He was subject to them." Blush, O proud ashes! God humbles Himself; and dost thou lift thyself up? God subjects Himself to men; and dost thou, seeking to rule over men, set thyself above thy Maker?

O happy Mary! in whom neither virginity nor humility was wanting—a virginity so singular, indeed, that motherhood left it inviolate, and added to its honour. And, no less singular humility, which fruitful virginity took not away but still more ennobled; a fruitfulness far beyond compare, which both

virginity and humility accompanied. Which of these is not wonderful? which is not incomparable? which is not without parallel? It would be a wonder if, weighing these things, you did not doubt which ought most to excite your wonder—motherhood in a virgin or virginity in a mother; her exaltation from such progeny, or her lowliness under such an exaltation. Unless, indeed, without any hesitation, we are to prefer to any one of these things the combination of them all, and to deem it incomparably more excellent and more blessed to have received them all rather than to have received only some of them. And what wonder is it if God, who, as we see and read, 'is wonderful in His saints' (Ps. lxvii. 36), should have shown Himself to be wonderful in His Mother? Honour, then, ye Spouses! this inviolate virginity in corruptible flesh; and you, ye holy Virgins! honour this Virgin's fecundity. O all mankind! imitate the humility of the Mother of God.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O Lord Jesus Christ! who, subject to Mary and to Joseph, didst consecrate domestic life by Thine unspeakable virtues, grant that, with the help of both one and the other, we may learn from the example of Thy Holy Family, and may attain to everlasting fellowship with them. Who livest and reignest with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 21st.

THE LOSS OF JESUS IN JERUSALEM.

(From St. Bonaventure.)

That which is possessed with great love is not lost without great grief, and so it was that, deprived of the bodily presence of her only and beloved Son, whom she loved with the most tender love and above all things else, the Blessed Virgin was smitten in her soul with manifold sorrow. And she hardly allowed any sleep to her eyes or any rest to her feet until she found Him in the midst of the doctors in Jerusalem. There, as soon as she saw His most gracious face once more, rejoicing with great joy and ineffable delight, she uttered a timorous word—though, in deed, her speech was brief, as is a maiden's—which, nevertheless, was a word of prevision and of great wisdom, saying, 'Son, why hast Thou done so to us?' And, in-

deed, in saying this, she, like a most prudent Virgin, puts forth first her sweetness in that speech of her lips: 'Son, why hast Thou done so to us?' In the second place, she expresses the bitterness of the vast tribulation of her heart when she continues: 'Thy father and I (have sought Thee) *sorrowing*.' In the third place, she tells of her solicitude throughout the course of her discreet inquiries for Him when she adds: 'Have *sought* Thee.' So, in those words, the Blessed Virgin, with great prudence, quietly insinuates that she had given to God the thoughts of her heart, the words of her mouth, and the labour of her entire person. First, then, is seen in the words set forth the sweetness of the speech of her lips, when she says: 'My Son.' For so good a Son as Jesus well deserved to be spoken to so sweetly, for, like every good son, He is the joy and the delight of His Virgin-Mother. In the second place, she says: 'Thy father and I—*sorrowing*,' in which we note the bitterness of the profound grief of her heart. In sooth, O glorious Virgin! I do not wonder if thy heart is suffering, if there is bitterness in it, if there is sorrow; I should wonder rather if thou

didst not suffer in the loss of that personal presence of thy beloved Son, which had filled thy soul with manifold consolation. The glorious Virgin suffered in this world many sorrows, many tribulations, many bitter griefs, because of her Son; but for the present we shall speak of her sorrow as a triple sorrow. For she grieved, first, because of the absence of her Son; secondly, because of her vision of the Passion of our Lord; and thirdly, in her co-passion, seeing the blindness of the Jews. In the third place, Mary alludes to her anxiety in her prudent search and in all she did when she says: '(We) have sought Thee.' For the Blessed Virgin was very anxious in seeking for her Child, although she had not been careless in losing Him; for it was a custom of the Jews—so the commentators tell us—that, in their processions and their journeyings, when they went up to the Temple—and while they remained in the Temple—the men and women did not travel together but in separate bands. The children, however, were not bound by this rule, and sometimes went with their fathers, and sometimes with the women. This was why

Mary, the Virgin Mother. thought that the Child Jesus was with Joseph in the company of the men, and Joseph that he was among the women's company. (This custom had been introduced for the sake of right conduct and chastity of life.) Therefore it is plain that Mary was not negligent in losing Jesus; but she was very anxious and very diligent in her search for Him, for she sought Him, first, with a good conscience and in faith; then, with a wide charity, in her love of Him; and, finally, with hope, in certitude and confidence.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O God! in whose Passion, according to the prophecy of Simeon, a sword of sorrow transpierced the most tender soul of Thy most glorious Virgin-Mother, Mary, merci-

fully grant that we, who with veneration call to mind her Dolours, may experience the happy effect of Thy Passion. Who livest and reignest with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 22nd.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN'S MARTYRDOM.

(From St. Bernard.)

The Blessed Virgin's martyrdom is put before us in Simeon's prophecy, and also in the history of the Passion of our Lord. 'Behold, this Child is set,' says the holy old man of the Infant Jesus, 'for a sign which shall be contradicted; and thy own soul,' he says to Mary, 'a sword shall pierce' (St. Luke ii. 34, 35). And, indeed, O Blessed Mother! it did pierce thy soul; for, unless it had passed through thy soul first, it could never have penetrated the flesh of thy Son. Yea, when thine own Jesus had given up the ghost, the cruel lance that pierced His side did certainly not touch His soul, but as certainly it pierced thine through and through; for His soul was no longer there, while thine could not thence be even torn

away. The power of sorrow, then, went through and through thy soul, so that we may, and not untruly, call thee martyr, since in thee the pain of thy co-passion exceeded the sufferings of sense. Was not that word, 'Woman, behold thy Son!' sharper than any sword to thee, transpiercing as it did thy soul, and 'reaching even unto the division of the soul and the spirit?' (Heb. iv. 12). Ah, what an exchange! John is given thee for Jesus, the servant instead of the Lord, the disciple in the place of the Master, the son of Zebedee for the Son of God, a mere man for the very God. The words that fell upon thine ears, how could they but transpierce thy most loving soul, seeing that our stony hearts—nay, our iron hearts—are broken by the mere remembrance of them?

Wonder not, my Brethren! that Mary is said to have been a martyr in her soul; or let him only wonder who does not remember to have heard St. Paul mentioning, as among the greatest crimes of the Gentiles, that they were without affection. It was far otherwise in Mary's heart. Let it be far otherwise with her lowly servants. But someone, perhaps, may say: Did she not foreknow that

Jesus would die? She did with certainty. Did she not hope that He would at once rise again? Faithfully she hoped. And yet she wept over Him when He was crucified? She did vehemently. If you think differently, who are you, my Brother! and whence this wisdom of yours, that the co-passion of Mary should seem to you more strange than the Passion of Mary's Son? Is it to be said that He could even die in the body, and that she in her heart could not die along with Him? The one thing was done from a love greater than which no man has had, and the other from a love the like of which has never been since then.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O God! in whose Passion, according to the prophecy of Simeon, a sword of sorrow

transfixed the most tender soul of Thy most glorious Virgin - Mother, Mary, mercifully grant that we who, with veneration, call to mind her Transfixion and her sorrow may, by the intercession of the glorious merits and prayers of all the Saints who stood faithfully beneath the Cross, experience the happy effect of Thy Passion. Who livest and reignest with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 23rd.

OUR LADY'S SEVEN WORDS.

(From St. Bernardine of Siena.)

HAD he not the Word of God to sustain him, what mortal would attempt, with his polluted lips, to say much, or even to say a little, about the very Mother of the God-Man, whom before all ages God the Father predestinated to be the most worthy ever-Virgin; whom the Son chose for His Mother; whom the Holy Ghost prepared as the home of all grace? In what words, then, shall I—poor man!—set forth the profoundest sentiments of that virgin heart which her most holy lips expressed, seeing that no tongue of man nor even of angel could suffice for such a task? For the Lord says: 'A good man out of a good treasure (of his heart) bringeth forth good things' (Matt. xii. 35). But of all our human kind who can be conceived better than she, who merited to become the Mother

of God, who in her heart and in her womb received the very God as guest? What treasure is better than divine love itself, with which the Virgin's heart was all on fire? From this heart, as from a furnace of divine heat, the Blessed Virgin brought forth good words—I mean, words of the most ardent charity. For, as from a vase full of the choicest wine only choicest wine can be poured, or as from a furnace of greatest heat only burning fire can come forth, so from the heart of the Mother of Christ no word can issue but of the highest and the most highly divine life and fervour.

Seven words only—so far as we read—of wonderful judgment and virtue were spoken by the most blessed Mother of Christ. She spoke twice, and only twice, with the Angel. With Elizabeth twice also. And twice again with her Son. And she spoke once to the waiters at the marriage-feast. These seven words, expressive of seven acts of love, and spoken with gradation and order, are, as it were, seven flames from her heart. And the pious mind, meditating upon these words, says with the Prophet: 'How sweet are thy words to my palate!' (Ps. cxviii. 103)—that

is to say, how sweet to all my affections! Moreover, this sweetness which the devout mind feels in the words of the Blessed Virgin is an ardour of devout piety which the soul finds in them from experience. Let us, then, put separately, and in their sequence, these seven flames of love in the Blessed Virgin's words.

The first is the flame of discerning love—when Mary said to the Angel (of the Annunciation): 'How shall this be done, because I know not man?' The second is the flame of transforming love—when Mary consented to the mystery of the Incarnation, saying, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word.' The third is the flame of the communion of love—when Mary 'saluted Elizabeth.' The fourth is the flame of love's exultation—her *Magnificat*. The fifth is the flame of the savour of love—when she said to Jesus, who had been lost in Jerusalem: 'Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.' The sixth is the flame of love's compassion—when she said to Jesus at Cana: 'They have no wine.' And the seventh is the flame of love's consummation—when our Lady said to them

who were waiting on the will of our Divine Lord: 'Whatever He shall say to you, do ye.'

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).
Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Almighty and everlasting God! who didst prepare, in the Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a worthy dwelling for the Holy Ghost, mercifully grant that, while with pious mind we commemorate this most pure Heart of hers, we may be able to live according to Thy Heart. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the same Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 24th.

THE HELP OF CHRISTIANS.

(From St. Bernard.)

DEARLY BELOVED! one man and one woman wrought us much harm, but, none the less—thanks be to God!—through one man and one woman all things are set right again, and that with great usury of grace. Verily Christ was enough, for now, indeed, all 'our sufficiency is in Him' (2 Cor. iii. 5); but it was not good for us that man should be alone (Gen. ii. 18). It was more fitting that both sexes should have to do with our redemption. And thus the woman, 'blessed among women,' will at once be seen not to be idle, for a place will be found for her in this reconciliation. For we need an intermediary between us and the Mediator, Christ; and none can be more useful to us than Mary. A very cruel intermediary was Eve, through whom the ancient serpent infected even her husband with his pestiferous poison; but Mary was true and

trustful, and she gave forth, both to men and women, the saving antidote. The one served unto seduction, the other unto propitiation ; the one brought in prevarication, the other redemption.

Why should human weakness fear to come nigh to Mary? There is nothing austere in her, nothing terrible ; she is all sweetness, offering milk and wool to all. Consider well the whole course of the Gospel history, and if haply you find in Mary any harshness or any hardness—in a word, any sign of even slight indignation—suspect her for the time to come, and fear to draw near to her. But if you find her rather to be, as indeed she is, full of all tenderness and all grace, full of all gentleness and all mercy, give thanks to Him who, in His great and tender pity, has given you such an intermediary as she, in whom you can have entire confidence. In short, in the abundance of her charity she has made herself 'all things to all men' (1 Cor. ix. 22)—'a debtor to both the wise and the unwise' (Rom. i. 14). She opens up to all the bosom of her mercy, that of her fulness all may receive : the captive ransom ; the sick health ; the sorrowful comfort ; the sinner for

giveness ; the righteous grace ; and the Angels joy. She does not inquire what our merits may have been, but shows herself exorable and most merciful to all : in the largeness of her love she takes pity upon all our necessities.

She is the woman of whom, in the olden time, God promised that with her foot of power she should crush the head of the ancient serpent ; and he, indeed, with many wiles, lay in wait for her heel, but lay in wait in vain. For she, of her sole self, has crushed all the wickedness of heresy. They that lay in wait for her have been crushed, they that attacked her have been trodden down, they that maligned her have been confuted, and all generations call her blessed. If, under the simile of the moon, we are to recognize the Church, it is evident that the Blessed Virgin's mediatorial office is set forth for us in the words : 'A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet' (Apoc. xii. 1). Let us kiss the footprints of Mary ; let us cast ourselves down in devoutest supplication before her blessed feet ; let us take hold of her and not let her go until she bless us, for she can.

Consider, O man ! the counsel of God, and recognize therein a counsel of wisdom and of

goodness. He who was about to water all the ground with the dews of heaven began by drenching the fleece; He who was about to redeem the human race conferred the whole ransom on Mary. Consider, still more deeply, how He wills that we should honour Mary with all affection of devotion, He who has bestowed upon her the plenitude of all good; so that if we have any hope, any grace, any salvation, we know that it is her overflow, 'who cometh up, flowing with delights' (Cant. of Cant. viii. 5). From the very core, then, of our hearts, and with all our deepest affections and all our desires, let us venerate this Mary of ours, since such is the will of Him who has been pleased that all things should come to us through Mary. Such, I say, is His will—and for our sakes. For in all things and through all things He provides for our miseries, consoles our fears, arouses our faith, confirms our hope, drives away our diffidence, and gives us courage in our cowardice. Thou wast ashamed to approach the Father, and, fearful at the mere sound of His voice, didst flee to the foliage: He gave thee Jesus to be thy Mediator. What will such a Son not obtain from such a Father! He will surely

be 'heard for His reverence' (Heb. v. 7), for 'the Father loveth the Son' (St. John iii. 35). But perhaps thou fearest the Divine Majesty also in Him, since although He became Man, yet He remained God still. Wouldst thou have an Advocate also with Him? Have recourse to Mary. For in Mary there is nothing but pure humanity—pure, not only from any stain, but also in this that hers is human nature and nothing more. And I have no hesitation in saying that she also will be 'heard for her reverence.' The Son will surely hear the Mother, and the Father will hear the Son.

My little children, this is a ladder for sinners, this is my chief trust, this is the whole ground of my hope. And why? Can the Son either repel her or Himself suffer a repulse? Can He either not hear or Himself not be heard? Plainly, He cannot. 'Thou hast found grace with God,' says the Angel; and happily so. She will always find grace; and grace is all we need, since it is by grace alone that we are saved. Why do we desire aught else, my brethren? Let us seek grace, and let us seek it through Mary, for what she seeks she finds, and cannot seek in vain.

Let us seek grace, but grace with God, for among men 'favour is deceitful' (Prov. xxxi. 30). Let others seek for merit, but let us study to find grace. And why? Is it not by grace that we are here? In verity 'it is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed' (Lam. iii. 22).

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).
Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O almighty and merciful God! who in a wonderful way didst appoint the most Blessed Virgin Mary to be an abiding aid for the defence of the Christian commonwealth, mercifully grant that we, strong in her protection through the struggles of life, may be able to win the victory over our malignant enemy in death. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 25th.

OUR LADY'S VIRTUES.

(From St. Bernard.)

Wisdom, which was of God, and which was God, coming down to us from the bosom of the Father, 'built Himself a house,' to wit, the Virgin Mary, His own Mother, in whom 'He hewed Him out seven pillars.' What means this hewing in her of seven pillars, but the preparing her to be, by faith and good works, a worthy habitation for Himself? The numeral three refers to faith—that is, in the Blessed Trinity; and four refers to morality—that is, to the four cardinal virtues. The Holy Trinity was present by its majesty in the Blessed Mary—the Son only being present by taking upon Himself our human nature—and to this the heavenly messenger bears witness, who, revealing to her the hidden mysteries, says, 'Hail, full of grace! the Lord is with thee,' and, a little later,

'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee' (St. Luke i. 28, 35). Lo! we have here our Lord, we have the power of the Most High, we have the Holy Ghost; so that we have the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

And whether she possessed, as it were so many pillars, the four cardinal virtues also, seems worth our inquiry. And, first, let us see whether she was possessed of fortitude. But how could such a virtue be lacking to her who, rejecting all the pomps of the world, and scorning all the pleasures of the flesh, proposed to live a virginal life for God alone? If I am not mistaken, this is that Virgin of whom Solomon has said: 'Who shall find a valiant woman? far and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her' (Prov. xxxi. 10). Furthermore, that she was temperate and just we prove more clearly than the daylight from the Angel's words to her and her reply to him. For, having been saluted with such veneration by the Angel in those words, 'Hail, full of grace! the Lord is with thee,' she was not full of pride because she had been blessed by a singular

privilege of grace, but she kept silence, and thought within herself what might be the meaning of this unusual salutation. And in this matter what was she if not temperate? But when the same Angel informed her of the heavenly mystery, she earnestly inquired how she, who knew not man, should conceive and bring forth; and in this, certainly, was her prudence shown.

As to justice, she bears its insignia upon her, when she declares herself to be the handmaid of the Lord; for he bears witness as to what constitutes a showing-forth of justice, who says: 'The just shall confess unto thy name.' The Blessed Virgin Mary, then, had fortitude in what she purposed, temperance in her silence, prudence in her questioning, and justice in the profession that she made. With these four pillars of right conduct, then, and those three points of faith aforesaid, heavenly Wisdom hath built Himself a house in her, for He so fulfilled her spirit that, from the fulness of her soul, her body also bore its fruit.

It was meet that God should be born only of a virgin. It was becoming that a virgin-mother should be the Mother of God alone.

Therefore, the Creator of mankind, about to be born in our human nature, was obliged, in order to become incarnate, to choose for Himself from among all others—nay, to create for Himself—such a Mother as He knew would be worthy of Him and be pleasing unto Him. Accordingly, His will was that she should be a virgin, that from her, stainless herself, He stainless should come forth, to purge away all our stains. He willed also that she should be humble, that He might be born of her 'meek and humble of heart,' to give us all, in His own person, a needful and a most salutary example of these virtues. He granted a maiden motherhood to her, in whom He had already inspired a devotion to virginity, and had dowered with the merit of her lowliness. And in order that she, who was to conceive and to bring forth the Holy of Holies, should be holy in body, she received the gift of virginity; while she received the gift of humility that she might be holy also in mind.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O God! who, through the mystery of the Incarnate Word, didst mercifully consecrate the house of the Blessed Virgin Mary [and in the midst of Thy Church didst wonderfully place it], grant that, separated from the tabernacles of sinners, we may be made worthy dwellers in Thy holy house. Through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 26th.

THE ASSUMPTION.

(From St. John Damascene.)

To-day the sacred and living Ark of the living God, who conceived the Creator in her womb, sinks to rest in that temple of the Lord which is not made with hands; and David, her ancestor, dances before her, and with him the Angels lead the dance, the Archangels sing aloud, the Virtues glorify her, the Principalities exult, the Powers rejoice together, the Dominations are made glad, the Thrones make holiday, the Cherubim sing songs of praise, the Seraphim proclaim her greatness. To-day Eden receiveth that living paradise of the Second Adam, wherein the condemnation was annulled, wherein the Tree of Life was planted, wherein our nakedness was veiled. To-day the spotless Virgin, undefiled by any earthly desire, and addicted only to celestial thoughts, returned not to the

dust, but, herself a living heaven, took her place amidst the heavenly mansions. For how should she taste of death, from whom true life had flowed for us all? She obeyed the law which He had made whom she brought forth, and, as a daughter of the old Adam, she was subject to the olden condemnation, since her own Son, who is Life itself, did not withdraw Himself from its effect; but as the Mother of the living God, she is worthily assumed by Him unto Himself.

Eve, who gave assent to the suggestion of the serpent, is condemned to bring forth in sorrow and to die the death, and has her place in the bowels of the earth. But this truly blessed being—who lent her ears to the Word of God, who, knowing not man nor any pleasure of sex, conceived the Son of God at the Archangel's salutation by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and brought Him forth without travail, and who consecrated herself wholly unto God—how should death feed upon her? How should the grave receive her? How should corruption invade that body, of which Life had been the guest? For her the way to heaven had been made straight, and smooth, and easy.

For if Christ, who is the Life and the Truth, has said, 'Where I am, there also shall My minister be' (John xii. 26), how much rather shall His own Mother be with Him!

An ancient tradition has been handed down to us which says that when the Blessed Virgin so gloriously fell asleep, all the holy Apostles, who were wandering through the world for the salvation of the nations, were borne through the air, and in one moment of time were assembled in Jerusalem; and that being there, there appeared unto them a vision of Angels, and there was heard the psalmody of heavenly Powers; and so, with such circumstance of divine glory, she yielded up her holy soul into the hands of God. But her body, which in an ineffable manner God had tenanted, was carried forth, amid the hymnody of the Angels and the Apostles, and was buried in Gethsemani; and there for three whole days the singing of the Angels never ceased.

But when three days were over and the Angels' songs were done, and Thomas, the only one of their number to be absent, had now arrived after three days, and wished to worship that body which had encompassed

God, the Apostles who were still there opened up the tomb once more; but the sacred body could not anywhere be found. All they could discover was the shroud wherein it had been wrapped, which gave forth some unspeakable sweetness of which it was full; and so they closed the tomb again. Wonder-struck by this miracle and mystery, they could only conclude that He who was pleased to become Incarnate of the Virgin Mary and to be made Man and be born of her, being all the while the Word of God and the Lord of glory, and who had preserved her virginity inviolate even in her motherhood, had been pleased also, after her passing, to honour her immaculate body, preserved from all corruption, by translating it hence before the general resurrection common to us all. There were present at that time with the Apostles the most holy Timothy, first Bishop of the Ephesians, and Dionysius the Areopagite, as this latter bears witness in these words which he wrote to the aforesaid Timothy about the blessed Hierotheus, who was also of their company: 'When, as thou knowest, we and many of our holy brethren had come together to our

God-inspired prelates in sacred things, to gaze upon that body which was the source of life and the tabernacle of God (there were there also James, the brother of the Lord, and Peter, the highest and oldest and most excellent of theologians), we, having seen the sacred body, were all right glad, every man as well as he was able, to celebrate in canticles the infinite goodness of the power of God.'

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).
Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O Lord! we beseech Thee, pardon the sins of Thy servants; and since by our own deeds we are unable to please Thee, may we be saved by the intercession of the Mother of Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 27th.

MARY'S HUMILITY.

(From St. Bernard.)

We read in the Acts of the Apostles that, returning from the Mount of Olives, they 'persevered with one mind in prayer' (chap. i.). Who were they? If haply Mary was of the number, she is named first, since she is superior to them all by both the privilege of her Divine Maternity and the prerogative of her personal holiness. Peter and Andrew are mentioned, and James and John, and the rest of them. 'All these were persevering with one mind with the women, and Mary, the Mother of Jesus.' Does she make herself the least of even the women that she may be named the last of all? Truly, the disciples were still carnal-minded—for the Holy Ghost was not yet given to them, since Jesus was not yet glorified—when there arose a contention amongst

them as to which of them was the greater. With Mary, the greater she was the more lowly she made herself, and not only amongst others, but even beneath all others. And deservedly the last was made first, since, though she was the first of all, she had made herself the lowest and the least. Deservedly has she been made the Lady and mistress of all, who made herself the handmaid of all. Deservedly, in fine, was she exalted above the Angels, who, with unutterable meekness, made herself more lowly than widows and than penitents, nay, more lowly than even she out of whom seven devils had been cast.

I beseech you, my little Children! if you love Mary, emulate this virtue; if you are striving to please her, imitate her modesty, for nothing so becomes a mortal, nothing so befits a Christian. And, in fact, the virtue of humility is clearly made manifest in the Virgin by this same mansuetude of hers. For humility and meekness are foster-sisters, and are joined together more closely still in Him who said: 'Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart' (St. Matt. xi. 29). For as pride is the mother of presumption,

so true meekness can come only from true humility. But it is not only from Mary's silence that her humility is seen, for it is yet more evident in the sound of her words. She had heard, 'The Holy which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God' (St. Luke i. 35), and her only answer is that she is His handmaid.

Later, on her visit to Elizabeth, at once the Virgin's singular glory is revealed to her by the Holy Ghost; and Elizabeth, marvelling at the person of her visitor, says: 'Whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?' and, further, she praises the voice that saluted her, adding: 'As soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.' And then she blessed the believer's faith, saying; 'Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished which were spoken to thee by the Lord' (St. Luke i. 43-45). High praise, indeed, was this, but devoted also the humility which could not bear to take anything of all this to itself, but rather gave back again everything to Him whose bounteous favours had been lauded in herself. Thou

dost magnify, she says, the Mother of the Lord, but 'my soul doth magnify the Lord.'

Who is this Virgin, worshipful enough to be saluted by an Angel, and humble enough to be espoused to a carpenter? Beautiful mixture of virginity and humility! And well-pleasing is that soul to God in which humility recommends virginity, and virginity enhances humility. But of how much greater worship, think you, is she worthy, in whom humility is exalted by motherhood, and child-bearing consecrates virginity? In naming her Virgin, you name also one who is humble. If you cannot copy the lowly one's virginity, imitate the Virgin's humility. Virginity is a laudable virtue, but humility is more necessary: that is of counsel, while this is of precept; the one you are invited to have, the other you are obliged to cultivate. Of the one is said: 'He that can take, let him take' (St. Matt. xix. 12); but of the other we read: 'Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven' (St. Matt. xviii. 3). In fine, you may be saved without virginity; you cannot without humility. Humility, I say, can please which deplores a lost virginity; without humility,

I venture to say, not even the virginity of Mary would have been found pleasing. Upon whom, it is asked, shall rest my Spirit but on the humble and the peaceful? Upon the humble, is said, not on the virginal. It is plain also from this that, in order that she might conceive of the Holy Ghost, as she herself sets forth, God 'regarded the humility of His handmaid' rather than her virginity; and though she was pleasing by her virginity, yet it was by her humility that she conceived; whence it is manifest, and without a doubt, that it was only her humility which gave to her virginity any power to please.

What dost thou say, proud maiden? Mary, unmindful that she is a virgin, glories in her lowliness; and thou, neglecting humility, art vain of thy virginal estate? She says: 'He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid.' Who is she? In very truth, a holy Maiden, a modest Maiden, a pious Maiden. Art thou more chaste than she? Or, haply, is thy modesty so much more pleasing than Mary's chastity, that without humility thou shalt be able to be pleasing enough by thy purity where she could not by hers? Finally, the more

worthy of honour thou art because of thine especial gift of purity, the more notable the injury thou doest thyself when thou dost defile its beauty within thee by any admixture of pride.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).
Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O God! who hast regard unto all that is lowly, and dost look upon all that is proud from afar off, grant to Thy servants to imitate with a pure heart the humility of the Blessed Mary, ever a Virgin, who, well-pleasing to Thee by her virginity, by her humility conceived our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 28th.

THE NAME OF MARY.

(From St. Bernard.)

It is said : 'And the Virgin's name was Mary' (St. Luke i. 27). Let us say a few words about this name, which is interpreted to mean 'star of the sea,' and is most aptly applied to the Virgin-Mother, for she is very properly compared to a star. For as the star sends forth its rays without any loss to its purity, so the Virgin brought forth her Son without any detriment to her virginity. The ray does not lessen the brightness of the star, nor her Son the Virgin's purity. She is, then, that noble star which arose out of Jacob, whose beams illumine the whole world, whose brightness shines out in heaven and penetrates even unto hell, lighting up every land, and which, warming souls rather than bodies, cherishes virtue and makes vice wither away. She is, I say, that bright

especial star necessarily set above the wide, wide sea, shining by her merits and enlightening by her example.

O thou! whosoever thou art, who knowest that thou art not walking on dry land, but art tossed to and fro by storms and tempests on the ocean of this world, turn not away thine eyes from the shining of this star, if in this tempest thou wouldst not be a castaway. If the loud winds of temptation rise against thee, if thou art running on the rocks of tribulation, look up to this star—call upon Mary. If thou art tossed about on the waves of pride, or ambition, or slander, or envy, look up to this star—call upon Mary. If anger, or avarice, or allurement of the flesh beat down upon the shallop of thy spirit, look up to Mary. If, disturbed by the enormity of thy crimes, confounded by the foulness of thy conscience, and terrified by fear of the judgment, thou art about to be swallowed up in the depths of despondency, in the abyss of despair, call upon Mary. In dangers, in difficulties, or in doubts, think upon Mary, call upon Mary. Let her not leave thy lips, nor leave thy heart, and, that thou mayest obtain the patronage of her prayers, fail not

to imitate the example of her life. Following her, thou wilt not go astray; praying to her, thou wilt not despair; keeping her in mind, thou wilt not err. If she holds thee, thou wilt not fall; if she protects thee, thou wilt not fear; if she leads thee, thou wilt not tire; if she be propitious, thou wilt attain; and so, in thine own proper person, thou wilt prove with what good reason it was said: 'And the Virgin's name was Mary.'

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God! that Thy faithful, who rejoice under the name and protection of the most holy Virgin Mary, may, by her merciful intercession, be delivered from all evils upon earth, and may merit to attain unto everlasting joy in heaven. Through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 29th.

THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

(From St. Bernard.)

MARY is rightly shown forth to us clothed with the sun, for she, to a degree that is hardly credible, sounded the profoundest abyss of the wisdom of God, so much so, indeed, that, so far as the condition of a creature allows, and short of a union in personality, she seems to be immersed in that light inaccessible. That is the fire with which the lips of the Prophet were purified; that is the flame with which the Seraphim are on fire. But far otherwise did Mary merit; and she was not touched, as it were, on the surface, but was rather covered over by that fire and surrounded, and, as it were, shut in. In sooth, this woman's vesture is of great whiteness, but also of great heat, and everything in her is known to be so completely irradiated that there is nothing

in her which can be even suspected to be, I do not say darkful, but even darksome or lacking in the least in light; neither is there anything lukewarm to be found in her, nor anything that is not most fervent.

'A woman clothed with the sun'—clothed, indeed, with the light for vesture. The carnal man perceives not this, perchance; for whatever is spiritual seems to him but foolishness. But the Apostle saw it otherwise, who said: 'Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ' (Rom. xiii. 14). Lady, how familiar thou hast become with Him! How near, nay rather, how very intimate hast thou merited to become! How much grace hast thou found with Him! He abideth in thee, and thou in Him: thou art His vesture, and by Him thou art garmented. Thou dost clothe Him with the substance of flesh, and by Him thou art clad with the glory of His majesty. Thou dost clothe the sun with a cloud, and thou art thyself clothed with the sun. For 'the Lord hath created a new thing upon the earth—a woman shall compass a man' (Jer. xxxi. 22).

Therefore, Mother of Mercy! we call upon thee, who hast been appointed our Mediatress

with the Sun of righteousness—we call upon thee with devout supplication, that in thy light we may see light, and merit by thy care the favour of the Sun, for verily He loved thee above all others and adorned thee, robing thee with a robe of glory and setting a crown of beauty on thy brow. Thou art full of graces, full of heavenly dew, leaning upon thy beloved, and flowing with delights. O Lady! feed thou to-day thy poor; let even the whelps eat of the crumbs; give to drink, from thine overflowing pitcher, not only to Abraham's servant but to his camels also, for thou art truly the Maiden pre-elect, provided for the Son of the Most High (Gen. xxiv.).

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O God! who didst vouchsafe to gladden the world by the resurrection of Thy Son,

our Lord Jesus Christ, grant, we beseech Thee, that, by the help of His Mother, the Virgin Mary, we may attain to the joys of everlasting life. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

May 30th.

HOW MARY COMES TO US ONCE MORE.

(From St. Peter Damian.)

O VIRGIN-MOTHER of God, our Lady! whose beauty sun and moon admire, help those who cry to thee perpetually: 'Return, return, O Sulamitess! return, return that we may behold thee' (Canticle of Canticles, vi. 12). Thou blessed One, thou super-blessed! return (first) by thy nature. Hast thou forgotten our humanity because thou hast become so God-like? By no means, Lady!—thou knowest in what difficulty thou wouldst leave us, in what depth we lie, how deeply we, thy servants, sin. It were not right that such great mercy should be forgetful of such great misery, for, though thy glory draws thee away from us, thy nature draws thee back again: thou art not so mindful of only the justice of God as to be

unmindful to have mercy, nor art thou so impassible as not to be compassionate. Thou hast our nature, not any other ; and it is only right that the dews of thy vast pity should be shed more abundantly upon us.

Return (secondly), return by thy power. 'He that is mighty hath done great things in thee,' and all power hath been given to thee in heaven and on earth. Nothing is impossible to thee, to whom it is possible to raise up the despairing to the hope of beatitude. For how could that power withstand thy power, which from thy flesh took flesh at the first? For thou comest before that golden gate of man's reconciliation, not only praying, but commanding—the Lady, not the handmaid. Let thy nature move thee ; let thy power, for the more powerful thou art, the more merciful thou oughtest to be. It is to the glory of thy power that it will not avenge injury where it may.

Return (thirdly) by thy love. I know, O Lady ! that thou art most benignant, and that thou lovest us with an invincible love, whom in thee and through thee thy Son and thy God loved with an exceeding love.

Who knows how often thou dost soften the anger of the Judge, when the virtue of justice comes forth from the presence of the Godhead!

Return (fourthly) by thine onliness. In thy hands are the treasures of the mercies of God, and thou art chosen as the only one to whom grace is granted. God forbid that thy hand should be idle, since thou dost seek occasion to save the miserable and to pour forth mercy; for thy glory is not diminished but increased when penitents, justified by pardon, are assumed unto glory. Return, then, O Sulamitess!—which means despised one—whose soul the sword transpierced, who wast known as the wife of a carpenter. But why? 'That we may behold thee.' Our highest glory, after the vision of God, is to see thee, to cling close to thee, and to abide in the strength of thy protection. Hearken to us, for thy Son honours thee by denying thee naught, who is God blessed for evermore.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O God! who, by the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, didst prepare a worthy dwelling-place for Thy Son, we suppliantly beseech thee that, celebrating the apparitions of our Blessed Lady, we may attain to health of both mind and body. Through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p 7).

May 31st.

OUR LADY AS OUR ADVOCATE.

(From St. Thomas of Villanova.)

MARY is a tower based upon the immovable foundation of a firm rock in the holy mountains, for in the midst of her God shall not be moved. It is said of this Virgin, in the Canticle of Canticles: 'As the tower of David, which is built with bulwarks; a thousand bucklers hang upon it, all the armour of valiant men' (iv. 4). Verily the tower of David, of that David (I mean) who, with five stones out of the brook—that is, His five wounds—and with His Cross for staff, laid low the proud Goliath, boasting on the hill of Calvary. This tower has become a bulwark of the Church, and the only refuge of sinners, that thereto all the guilty, all the sorrowful, all the afflicted, may have recourse, and by her protection be delivered from the enemy. O man! in whatsoever

tribulation thou mayest be, take refuge with Mary: whether thou art afflicted by sin, or sorely persecuted, or harassed by temptations, flee to this tower, take refuge with Mary. For 'a thousand bucklers hang upon it,' and in her thou wilt find a most sure shield to protect thee, that thou mayest withstand the devil to his face when in his rage he would afflict and persecute thee.

For there is 'all the armour of valiant men': there is the faith of the Apostles, there the fortitude of the Martyrs, there the purity of Virgins, the wisdom of Doctors, the poverty of Anachorites, the devotion of Confessors; there, in fine, is found the accumulated virtue of all the Saints. For never was any special privilege accorded to any of the Saints which, from the outset of her life and in a more abundant measure, did not shine forth in Mary. Lo! a castle most strongly fortified, lo! an impregnable tower, which never yielded tribute to the devil, nor promised him fealty. Into this Jesus entered, when 'the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us,' coming to expel His enemies and recover His kingdom, into which at the first the devil had intruded.

She was chosen to be our Advocate. For though, as says St. John, we have the Son for our Advocate with the Father, we needed also to have His Mother for our Advocate with the Son, for by our sins not only is the God offended whose precepts we violate, but the Son of God also, whose blood by sin we tread under foot, 'crucifying again the Son of God' (Heb. vi. 6); and therefore, as the Son intercedes for us with the Father, so His Mother intercedes for us with the Son. Wherefore the Son shows to the Father His side and His wounds, and the Mother pleads with her Son: Mine were 'the womb that bore Thee and the breasts that gave Thee suck' (St. Luke xi. 27). And thus she has become a fitting Advocate—fitting because most pure, fitting because most acceptable, fitting because most pitiful; for all these things are needful to an Advocate. Turn, then, our Advocate! thine eyes of mercy towards us: we have recourse to thee in all our necessities—fulfil thy duty, do what it is thine to do.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, etc. (p. 5).

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy ! etc. (p. 6).

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God !
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O Lord Jesus Christ ! the Good Shepherd who didst give Thy life for Thy sheep, and who, hanging on the Cross, didst commend us, Thy people and the sheep of Thy pasture, unto Thy Virgin-Mother, grant through her intervention that, following Thee, our Shepherd, on earth, we may be led unto the pastures of eternal life in heaven. Who livest and reignest with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, etc. (p. 7).

THE SECOND EVE.

ELIZABETH conceived a man, and Mary conceived a Man; but Elizabeth a mere man, and Mary God and Man. A wonderful thing is this, that a creature could conceive the Creator. What, then, my Brethren! must we understand but that He made unto Himself flesh from a Mother only, He who made the primal man without either father or mother? That first man was our fall, when the woman conceived the venom of the serpent in her heart, and death came to us through her; for the serpent persuaded unto sin, and his evil persuasion was not rejected. And if that first man was our fall, when the woman conceived the venom of the serpent in her heart, it need not surprise us that our salvation was wrought when a

woman conceived in her womb the flesh of the Almighty. Both sexes had fallen; both were to be raised up again. Through a woman we had been thrust into death; through a woman life and health were given us once more.

ST. AUGUSTINE.

THE END

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